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ABSTRACT

This report, based on national consultations with community, industry, and government stakeholders in Australia, as well as an analysis of the recommendations of 60 major reports on access and equity in vocational education and training prepared since 1990, brings together the key strategic areas where cooperative and concerted activity for access is to be improved and equity of outcomes is to be realized. The report discusses why access and equity are concerns and suggests five principles that should be followed to achieve access and equity. It also lists outcomes for access and equity that should be achieved by the year 2001 and ties possible strategies to the outcomes to create a plan. The plan includes the following priorities: (1) improving funding arrangements; (2) making training more relevant; (3) improving discriminatory attitudes; (4) increasing levels of language, literacy and numeracy skills; (5) improving basic work and life skills; (6) improving student and employee support; (7) improving child care provision for students; (8) eliminating bias in competency standards, curriculum, teaching, and course requirements; (9) increasing recognition of prior learning assessments; and (10) improving flexible delivery. An appendix provides a matrix showing causes of disadvantage among various groups of people in Australia. (KC)

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EQUITY 2001

Strategies to Achieve Access and Equity in Vocational Education and Training for the New Millennium

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL TRAINING AUTHORITY

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for
the New Millenium

AUSTRALIAN
NATIONAL TRAINING
AUTHORITY

September 1996

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CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	1
Why Access and Equity?	3
Principles to Achieve Access and Equity	5
Participation and Qualifications Profile	6
10-point Approach to Improved Performance to 2001 and Beyond	9
Improving Funding Arrangements	9
Making Training More Relevant	10
Improving Discriminatory Attitudes	11
Increasing Levels of Language, Literacy and Numeracy Skills	13
Improving Basic Work and Life Skills	13
Improving Student and Employee Support	14
Improving Child Care Provision for Students	15
Eliminating Bias in Competency Standards, Curriculum, Teaching and Course Requirements	16
Increasing Recognition of Prior Learning Assessments	18
Improving Flexible Delivery	18
Conclusion	20

1. Introduction

1.1 In 1996, the ANTA Board established a Project Steering Committee, chaired by Dr Gregor Ramsey, to develop advice on access and equity strategies for incorporation into the next National Strategy on Vocational Education and Training. The first National Strategy, developed in 1994, included "increased accessibility" as one of its four key themes.

1.2 In addition to Gregor Ramsey, who is the Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Western Sydney University, Chair of the ANTA Research Advisory Council and former head of the NSW TAFE Commission, the Project Steering Committee comprised:

- Mark Bagshaw, International Marketing Manager, IBM Australasia Ltd and Chair, ANTA Disability Forum
- Linda Burney, President of the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group and Chair, Interim Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Training Advisory Council
- Sally Davis, Chief Executive, Community Services and Health Industry Training Advisory Board
- Hanifa Dean, Adjunct Senior Research Fellow, Curtin University of Technology and Chair, non-English Speaking Background Ministerial Consultative Group on Vocational Education and Training
- Shirley Gregg, Director, Operations, Department of Industrial Relations, Vocational Education and Training, Tasmania and Gaye Oakes, Manager, Equity Policy
- Gwen James, MCEETYA VEET Women's Taskforce (from the Department of Industrial Relations and Training, Queensland)
- Bonita Matijevic, Director, Strategic Policy and Public Affairs, Australian National Training Authority
- Jenni Werner, General Manager, Human Resources, CRA Limited
- Michelle Wheeler, Director, Equity Policy, NSW Department of Training and Education Co-ordination and Natalie Conyer, A/g Director
- Tony Zanderigo, Principal Policy Officer, Training and Development Branch, Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs
- Secretariat support was provided by Leda Blackwood, Senior Project Officer and Kate Hutcheson, Project Officer, from the Australian National Training Authority.

1.3 The Project Committee produced an *Issues Paper*[1] in April 1996 and conducted national consultations with community, industry, and government stakeholders, by way of public consultations and focus group discussions in each State and Territory. Following input on the *Issues Paper*, the Committee produced a *Consultation Paper*[2] in June 1996 which was also distributed widely for comment.

1.4 The Committee's Work has also been informed by a stocktake of reports, and an analysis of the recommendations of 60 major reports from the stocktake, on access and equity in vocational education and training prepared since 1990.[3] It is very clear from the consultation and the considerable body of work already available, that implementation of strategies is necessary, rather than more research and more reports

1.5 Instead, this Report to the ANTA Board, *Equity 2001*, brings together the key, strategic areas where co-operative and concerted activity for access to be improved and equity of outcomes to be realised. The Project Committee appreciated the wide range of comments and input received from a broadly-based variety of sources from all over Australia.

2. Why Access and Equity?

2.1 Australia's future prosperity requires that the nation improve its economic performance and international competitiveness. To do this, we need to develop a diverse and dynamic national skill pool. This objective cannot be achieved without specific attention being given to the impediments that prevent many Australians from engaging optimally in employment and training.

2.2 Currently, there are many Australians whose potential skills and abilities are not being utilised. Redressing this under-utilisation of our human resource is not only important for the direct benefits which a skilled workforce brings to industry, but also in recognition of the high costs on governments (particularly in areas other than vocational education and training, such as welfare payments) and the consequent restrictions on economic growth, which persisting inequalities create.

2.3 There are also social benefits to improving the participation in, and outcomes from, education and training for individuals. The capacity of education and training to change people's life chances, to enable people to develop to their full potential and to have security and satisfaction in work and in life, has consequences not just for the individual, but for society.

2.4 For all of these reasons, in the consolidation and further development of the national training system, we need to make sure that the policy, planning, funding and delivery mechanisms for vocational education and training are inclusive of the needs of all Australians.

2.5 While there is broad agreement that access to vocational education and training has improved, this has not been uniform across sectors of provision or across client groups. Improving access will continue to be a priority issue, particularly in the context of a more open and competitive training market. However, access and equity means much more than providing 'equal access' to vocational education and training. While access is important, it is only the first step in achieving equity. Intervention which stops at participation as a sole measure of success, will invariably fail to deliver the increase in skill levels Australia is seeking.

2.6 As we know, not all Australians live on the 'level playing field'. Simply letting people through the front door of vocational education and training will not guarantee quality participation and successful training and employment outcomes. Strategies for equity - ie. training and employment outcomes at least on a par with the community average - need to encompass all of these goals: equal access, quality participation and successful outcomes.

2.7 The individual groups under-represented in vocational education and training, and to which this Report refers, are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- people with a disability
- people from a non-English speaking country as well as some people from a non-English speaking background
- women
- people living in rural and remote areas, and
- various emerging groups in the community such as people leaving institutional settings.

More information on the participation of most of these groups in the vocational education and training sector may be found in the ANTA publication, *Participation and Attainment of Individual Client Groups in Vocational Education and Training.*[4]

3. Principles to Achieve Access and Equity

3.1 The following set of principles underpin the policy framework and strategies to achieve access and equity.

1. Individuals, along with industry and enterprises, are clients of vocational education and training.

2. The training environment for individuals can be improved within the existing features of the national vocational education and training framework (ie. competency standards, curriculum, assessment, delivery and staff development).

3. The link between training and employment outcomes for individuals can be improved by industry and enterprises.

4. Training outcomes for individuals can be improved by shifting the balance at the national level from specific access and equity programs offered by training providers to supporting individuals from under-represented groups in training and employment.

5. Planning and funding to improve access and equity in vocational education and training should be on the basis of real and credible outcomes which are measurable and on which progress is reported regularly.

3.2 These Principles should be promulgated widely to stakeholders in vocational education and training, to guide development of the national vocational education and training framework and to demonstrate the importance of achieving equal access, quality participation and successful outcomes for individuals.

4. Participation and Qualifications Profile

4.1 The ANTA publication on *Participation and Attainment of Individual Client Groups in Vocational Education and Training*[5] sets out details of current participation rates and qualifications profile for the five key individual client groups.

4.2 Even amongst those groups where participation rates are higher than their share in the population, the outcomes of training and the qualifications profile are less positive than for the general population. In summary, their experience is characterised by:

- over-representation in basic preparatory and non-vocational courses;
- over-representation in the lower skill level positions;
- uneven representation in course completion and success rates;
- under-representation in the labour force;
- under-representation in management roles; and
- over-representation among the ranks of the long-term unemployed.

4.3 Outcomes and possible strategies to improve the performance of the vocational education and training sector in relation to these issues are outlined below. (Please note that in this section the Strategies relate to all of the groups.)

Outcomes by 2001	Possible Strategies
• **Increase in participation in structured and accredited training, by client populations currently under-represented and improved vocational and employment outcomes for individual clients, viz:** ***Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*** • Shift in qualifications profile to 40% of Indigenous qualification attainment at skilled, trade and professional/para-professional levels.	• Key agencies responsible for policy, planning and funding of vocational education and training, including ANTA, State/Territory Training Authorities, industry training advisory bodies (ITABs), and group training companies, put in place mechanisms for ongoing consultation with each of the individual client groups. • ITAB Board membership representative of the demographic profile of those industries ITABs represent.

- Participation and attainment rates of Indigenous peoples in courses linked to community services and health, public administration, tourism, hospitality, utilities and retail industries to a level proportionately equal to their non-Indigenous counterparts in these industries.

- Successful completion rates for Indigenous peoples, increased from 49% to 60%.

People who are non-English Speaking

- Increase in the proportion of migrants with overseas post-school qualifications, having all or part of their qualifications recognised in Australia, from 60% to 75%.

- A 40% increase in NESB peoples, successfully completing the operative, trades and skilled level courses.

- A 40% increase in English language, literacy and numeracy training for migrants, particularly women operatives.

People from Rural and Remote Areas

- Increase, by at least half, the proportion of students from rural and remote areas who are participating in the course of their choice, while remaining in their local community.

- Increase by 50%, the amount of structured and accredited training linked to local employment opportunities, which is being provided in rural and remote locations through flexible delivery arrangements.

- Processes for evaluation of VET programs include qualitative evaluation by relevant communities.

- In co-operation with the Departments of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, and Health and Family Services, develop strategies and goals for the increase in structured, accredited training provided through labour market programs.

- Share best practice examples of on-the-job and off-the-job training with industry, Group Training Companies and training providers which have been identified as a high priority, and backing this up with staff development and support.

- Develop partnerships between individual industries and training providers to negotiate specific goals and strategies for the improvement in training and work outcomes for client groups.

- Prioritise industries where there has been little or no accredited training, for resource allocations for the development of training programs and products.

Women • Increase the participation and attainment rates of female operative level employees, in structured and accredited training across all industries (particularly emerging industries), to a level which is proportionately equal to that for their male counterparts. • Participation and attainment rates in skilled and professional/para-professional level courses, on a par with males, across all industries. ***People with a Disability*** • Increase in overall participation from 4.3% to 8%. • Increase in attainment rates in Advanced Certificate and Associate Diploma level courses equivalent to those in the community who do not have a disability. • Increase in attainment rates in Trade Certificate level courses from 15% to 18%. • Successful module completion rates increased from 64% to 70%.	

5. 10-point Approach to Improved Performance to 2001 and Beyond

5.1 In considering the priority strategic areas to achieve access and equity, the Committee identified the causes of disadvantage in vocational education and training, rather than simply ascribing disadvantage to a 'category' of person, to provide a clearer strategic focus for intervention. This is not to say that there are not shared experiences within some identified groups in the community, nor to obviate the continued need for equity to be measured by improvements in outcomes for those groups not benefiting to the same degree as others.

5.2 To illustrate the causes of disadvantage, a matrix has been developed identifying the individual client groups mentioned in paragraph 2.7 above, and their place within the labour market, to assist in sorting through the issues or causes of disadvantage which individuals face. Only those issues considered of high priority for a particular group are listed. The matrix is provided at *Appendix 1*.

5.3 This matrix makes it clear that high priority issues are shared across client groups. Even so, different strategies or approaches will be required to address the specific ways in which each group may experience disadvantage. The issues identified are discussed below, as a 10-point plan to improve performance in access and equity to the year 2001 and beyond, with cross-reference to the relevant principles, the outcomes to be achieved by 2001 and suggested strategies to reach those outcomes.

5.4 It is important to stress that each part of the plan is inclusive of the other and one is not of a higher priority and/or less importance than another.

1: Improving Funding Arrangements
Principles 1, 4, 5

5.5 The need to improve performance in accessibility and to provide for equity measures in vocational education and training, often tends not to be addressed in the 'mainstream' funding arrangements for the system. While access and equity, as one of the themes of the first National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training, has been included as a requirement in the annual 'Profiles' process, it has not been an area which has been fundamental to the acceptance of, or negotiation of, the annual Profile. As a consequence, funding is often fought for on a 'one-off' project basis.

5.6 This points to a need for greater emphasis on:

- long-term program funding which can allow for greater continuity and certainty, and which, given that the outcomes sought are not likely to be achievable on a year-on-year basis, would provide the opportunity to yield improved results, and
- funding based on the outcomes sought in vocational education and training and the needs of the clients, rather than funding based on particular programs or concentrated on providers.

5.7 Such a funding model would need to be underpinned by the development of appropriate costing of the specific training and support needs of particular groups in the population.

5.8 It is recognised that there are additional costs in delivering training to groups under-represented in vocational education and training. This can range from costs because of literacy, language and numeracy needs; to the costs of remote or rural delivery; to meeting a physical disability; child care support; or providing support for a student or employee who is in a very different environment.

Outcomes by 2001	Possible Strategies
• Funding arrangements take account of differential funding requirements for successful outcomes by individual client groups. • Funding provided on an outcomes basis either to individual clients or employers to choose the off-the-job training which suits the needs of the individual. • A shift towards provision of long-term program funding for programs designed for disadvantaged clients, in order to provide for continuity and the ability to plan for long-term improvements in training outcomes.	• Basic unit costs established for students with differential levels of support needs. • Key agencies responsible for funding VET, review funding guidelines and develop approaches to ensure recognition of differential costs. • Evaluate efficacy and equity of current user choice arrangements, and where necessary, make adjustments.

2: Making Training More Relevant
Principles 1, 2, 3

5.9 Where vocational education and training is not, or does not appear to be, relevant to an individual's needs or life circumstances, the motivation to participate in and complete training is reduced. This is an issue where training is not linked to, and can not satisfy, people's aspirations. Cynicism about the capacity for training to provide opportunities for employment may be created where, for example, training has been provided through labour market programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and has not been realistically linked to employment or other outcomes. Similarly, there are many people with a disability accessing training programs funded from a variety of sources, which are not accredited or recognised and are, therefore, of limited value in enhancing long-term employment opportunities. Such programs provide access to training for the out-of-work, but little access to work itself.

5.10 The relevance of training may also be undermined where it is not promoted, or delivered, in a socially or culturally appropriate way. For people from culturally diverse backgrounds, and particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from remote communities, the opportunities created by training may not always be apparent, either because they are communicated in a way that does not take account of the social and cultural context, or because the content does not relate to the individual's experience. Content must always be relevant to the client, and not a 'modified' program designed for someone else.

Outcomes by 2001	Possible Strategies
• Improved knowledge and understanding of vocational education and training by individual clients.	• In consultation with the individual client groups, identify optimum form, content and distribution of information to meet the needs of individual clients.
• Perception of quality and relevance of training, to individual client groups, increased.	• Involve ITABs, group training companies, industry associations and unions in developing and distributing information to employers about the benefits of training and employing under-represented client groups. • Marketing strategies for VET to include use of appropriate role models and communication medium for the individual client groups. • Introduce the concept of a 'skills passport' where credit is given for a module or part-completion of a qualification.

3: ***Improving Discriminatory Attitudes***
Principles 2, 3

5.11 In the absence of discriminatory attitudes, we would expect people from client groups to be more evenly represented across all fields of endeavour, including in training and employment. However, both overt and covert discriminatory attitudes continue to be a cause of disadvantage for many individuals wishing to participate in training and in the workforce. This is an issue which particularly affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people with a disability, and people from some migrant backgrounds, and continues to have an impact on many women.

5.12 Such discrimination is usually expressed in terms of lower expectations of ability, skills and personal attributes, and stereotypes about the kinds of work for which a person is suited. For example, individuals may be directed into specific courses, or an employer may not provide training within the work place for some groups, as opposed to others where the improvement of their skills and employment opportunities is specifically targeted. It also reinforces the low expectations which some individuals, who have experienced disadvantage, often have for themselves, and also disregards other skills or attributes which people may already have that may be relevant to, and useful in, the workplace (eg. languages other than English).

Outcomes by 2001	Possible Strategies
• Increased social and cultural awareness and an understanding of principles of reasonable adjustment within the vocational education and training sector. • Increase the number of teachers and trainers from each of the individual client groups.	• Where currently unavailable develop staff development programs for increased social and cultural awareness and an understanding of principles of reasonable adjustment. • Identify priority areas for implementing programs, and set goals for implementation. Priority areas might include: . front-line administrative staff; . program managers; . human resource managers (providers and industry); . teaching and training staff in all settings; . people involved in the development of competencies and curriculum; and . RPL assessors. • ANTA in co-operation with the State Training Authorities, collect data on staff profiles of TAFE and set goals for increasing representation of client groups. • Skills Audit of individuals.

4: Increasing Levels of Language, Literacy and Numeracy Skills
Principles 2, 3

5.13 A lack of adequate language, literacy and numeracy skills affects all aspects of life, seriously impeding a person's ability to participate fully in the community, in training and in work. It is an issue which was identified, through the matrix, as being of fundamental importance for all of the groups listed, although it is of particular importance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, migrants and men with low post-school qualifications.

5.14 The constraints which a lack of adequate language, literacy and numeracy skills place on an individual's mobility within the labour market, make this a first order issue for those affected. Workplace health and safety make language skills an important issue and accordingly, must receive a high priority from industry.

Outcomes by 2001	Possible Strategies
• Increase by 75% in the provision of discrete language, literacy and numeracy courses in non-English speaking and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.	• (see Competencies and Curriculum) • Develop partnerships with non-English speaking and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for the tailoring and provision of language, literacy and numeracy courses.

• Increase by 50% in the number of operative level workers, completing recognised language, literacy and numeracy courses.	• Negotiate with industry and training providers, goals to increase operative level workers completing language, literacy and numeracy courses and support this with:
	  • sharing of best practice approaches
	  • dissemination of recognised language, literacy and numeracy training programs.

5: Improving Basic Work and Life Skills
Principles 1, 3, 4

5.15 For many people, both outside the labour market and amongst the long-term unemployed, the lack of very basic work and/or life skills, can be the major barrier to participation in 'mainstream' society and to employment. The most affected appear to be people with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, mature women entering the labour market for the first time, and people re-joining the community following periods of institutionalisation.

5.16 Basic work and life skills have tended to be treated as lying outside the domain of training for vocational outcomes. The principal issues appear to be an expectation of the level of work and life skills people will have by the time they exit school, and a failure to appreciate that vocational outcomes are predicated on the ability of a person, for example, to manage social interactions within the workplace or to catch public transport.

5.17 A related issue is the cultural framework underpinning the vocational education and training system for describing the nature of work and life. This framework is, in many cases, inadequate for addressing the social and economic realities of some people's lives. This might particularly be the case, for example, in rural and remote areas, where there are limited employment opportunities or in some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, where a functioning labour market may not exist. In these instances, basic skills may have an impact on an individual and a community's economic development without leading to a direct 'vocational' outcome.

Outcomes by 2001	Possible Strategies
• Improved recognition and articulation of basic work and life skills into structured and accredited training.	• Clarify the relationship and articulation between ACE and VET activities and align areas identified by client groups as a priority. • Incorporate basic work and life skills training within the policy, planning and funding framework of national VET.

6: Improving Student and Employee Support

Principles 1, 2, 3, 4

5.18 Perhaps the most important issue for people currently under-represented in vocational education and training or not attaining equitable outcomes from the system, is that of student or employee support. This is an issue across the community, and has direct bearing on the ability to access, participate in, and complete, training for many individuals, as well as finding and remaining in satisfying employment.

5.19 Student or employee support can include:

- the co-ordination of information and service delivery, both within VET and with external agencies
- the modification and provision of equipment and alternative modes of delivery
- financial resources for the individual to meet training and related costs
- access to adequately resourced support staff, and
- appropriate support in the first few weeks of work.

5.20 The high cost of individual support has meant that it tends to be primarily available within the public sector, where there is a legislative requirement for the equitable provision of training and work opportunities.

5.21 The opening up of the training market and shift away from training in institutions to enterprise-based training and flexible delivery, may create added challenges in terms of equity of outcomes.

Outcomes by 2001	Possible Strategies
• Models for provision and co-ordination of support services for individual clients participating in vocational education and training have been developed and promoted. • Funding support is in place for provision and co-ordination of service delivery for individuals in on-the-job and off-the-job training.	• In consultation with client groups and service providers, map the current services available to provide support to individual students. • Identify best practice in provision and co-ordination of service delivery and develop 'How to...' materials for sharing with public, private and community providers; group training companies and industry. • (See Funding Arrangements)

7: ***Improving Child Care Provision for Students***
Principle 2

5.22 The availability of affordable, accessible, and culturally appropriate child care, continues to be of importance to parents (and women in particular), and has an effect on their ability to undertake training, regardless of whether they are in the workforce or not. While considerable investment have been made by the Commonwealth Government in increasing child care provision, there is a need for this provision to be better targeted to students within VET, and to take account of particular social and cultural needs.

5.23 For example, the demographic profile for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples shows that many indigenous women take on child care responsibilities from a very young age. For this group, in particular, training for employment will not be an option as long as appropriate child care services are not available.

Outcomes by 2001	Possible Strategies
• 40% increase in child care places available to students in TAFEs or through other agencies, with priorities identified in consultation with key client groups. • Children's services in VET Aligned with the National Child Care Strategy. • Alignment of capital and recurrent funding processes for children's services in VET.	• Investigate the implications and opportunities in the National Child Care Strategy for improved children's services in VET. • In consultation with client groups, identify priority areas for improved child care provision. • Develop a long term plan for the VET sector, for capital and recurrent funding of children's services. • (See Funding)

8: Eliminating Bias in Competency Standards, Curriculum, Teaching and Course Requirements
Principle 2

5.24 While the development of competency-based training has the potential to provide for greater flexibility and accessibility of training, this has not always been realised. The Government's new apprenticeship and traineeship system (currently known as the Modern Australian Apprenticeship and Traineeship System or MAATS) will provide the opportunity to address issues of access and equity in the development of new products and programs.

5.25 In the development of competency standards, it is still the case, in many instances, that biases are being built-in, through assumptions about what is required to perform particular tasks, and a lack of knowledge about the principles of reasonable adjustment.

5.26 Likewise, with the development of curriculum, there continues to be a problem with assumptions being built-in about how all students learn, and their cultural and social frames of reference.

5.27 A further issue in terms of the linking of industry competencies with curriculum and course requirements, is the inflexibility with which the principle of linkage is sometimes applied. It is generally acknowledged that not all people undertake a course to gain entry to the particular industry for which the course has been designed. However, in many cases, the inability of a student to complete a module required to work in the industry, is being used as a basis for excluding the student from the course.

5.28 The development of training packages linking competency standards, learning strategies and materials, guidelines for assessment and professional development products and services provide an opportunity to incorporate the principles for access and equity (in section 3) in the existing features of the national vocational education and training framework.

Outcomes by 2001	Possible Strategies
• The administrative arrangements, products and programs developed under MAATS, are inclusive of the needs of individual clients. • New training packages are available in key industries and for occupations identified by industry and individual client groups, as a priority. • New training packages are socially, linguistically and culturally inclusive. • Competencies and curriculum are socially, culturally and linguistically inclusive. • All industry competency standards integrate language, literacy and numeracy standards. • All pre-entry level and entry level training courses include provision for optional language, literacy and numeracy; and basic work and life skills modules.	• Consultative arrangements with key individual client group representatives, are put in place for the development of administrative arrangements, products, programs and the identification of priorities for the new MAATS. • Through the principle planning mechanisms for the VET system, and in consultation with industry and the individual client groups, identify priority areas of training and set short and long term goals for the: - development of comprehensive training packages incorporating competencies, curriculum, and delivery; - development of training packages tailored to the needs of individual client groups, where required; - modification of existing competency standards and curriculum and support materials to enhance inclusivity. • Review national, State and Territory administered guidelines for the development of VET products and programs, and related approval processes, and where necessary, amend, to ensure social, linguistic and cultural responsiveness. • (See Improving Discriminatory Attitudes)

9: Increasing Recognition of Prior Learning Assessments
Principle 2

5.29 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is one of the key features of the national vocational education and training system. It offers great promise in improving training outcomes for many people currently disadvantaged within the labour market.

5.30 In particular, increased access to, and use of, RPL processes has the potential to increase significantly the number of migrants with recognised employment-related skills, and to enhance their employment opportunities. RPL is also a significant issue for those individuals who have extended periods out of the workforce, including women, people with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people who have been institutionalised, and those at risk of being long-term unemployed.

5.31 Some of the particular issues which need to be addressed in terms of RPL, are poor demand for RPL assessment because industry, training providers, community organisations, and individuals do not understand the processes or its value; an insufficient number of trained assessors; the cost of assessments, relative to the perceived benefits; and industry concerns about wages claims based on assessment.

Outcomes by 2001	Possible Strategies
• 50% increase in RPL assessments, with the focus being on workplace assessment for industries with high numbers of migrants and women at an operative level and pre-entry assessment, particularly for the long-term unemployed.	• Promote RPL to individual client groups and enterprises. • Simplify processes for accessing RPL. • Develop and promote widely through the VET sector, 'How to...' materials for socially and culturally inclusive RPL assessments. • Set goals for increased training of RPL assessors.

10: Improving Flexible Delivery
Principle 2

5.32 The key features of the national vocational education and training system, such as competencies, curriculum, and recognition of prior learning, provide the building blocks for delivery, which is responsive to the needs of the client. This potential, however, is not being realised as continuing structural rigidities such as 'time-based' courses, inflexible course requirements, and location bound infrastructure, lock many individuals out of training.

5.33 This may be a particular concern in rural and remote areas and in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, where facilities are not accessible or modes of delivery may not be appropriate; for people with a disability who require additional time for course completion and alternative modes of delivery; and for women who may be limited in the times at which they can undertake training.

5.34 There is currently a considerable amount of work and commitment of resources in developing and implementing flexible delivery approaches, and the needs of individual client groups should be included as part of these developments.

Outcomes by 2001	Possible Strategies
• Increased provision of training through flexible modes of delivery, for individual client groups.	• 'How to...', materials for flexible delivery for key client groups, in both on-the-job and off-the-job training disseminated and applied within TAFEs, group training companies, private providers and enterprises. • Evaluate current flexible delivery arrangements for success in meeting the needs of individuals.

6. Conclusion

6.1 This Report does four things:

- First, it provides a set of principles to underpin the policy framework and guide development of strategies to achieve access and equity in vocational education and training. The Project Committee believes that these are relevant to all aspects of the national vocational education and training framework and should remain relevant for many years.

- Second, it provides a series of outcomes to be achieved by the end of the year 2000, as well as possible strategies to achieve them. Obviously, the way in which the achievement of these outcomes is measured is also of critical importance. The Committee understands that this will be included in the development of the next National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training. The Committee believes that progress towards outcomes should be measured each year and reported on annually, but with the realisation that many of these outcomes can only reach potential over a 3-5 year period.

- Third, it does not seek to impose a series of new proposals and strategies, but has built on existing strategies and linked them together via the 10-point plan.

- The exception to this is the proposal regarding funding arrangements, with a move to outcomes-based funding, possible expansion of the 'user choice' approach and a costing model which reflects the unit costs of delivering training to people from those sections in the community with whom this Report is concerned.

6.2 The outcomes are realistic and achievable within a three-year timeframe, based on current levels of performance, if the strategies outlined throughout the Report are implemented.

6.3 This Report is to be incorporated into the draft of the revised National Strategy for Vocational Education, which is proposed to be released early in 1997. We look forward to *Equity 2001*, and the Principles, Outcomes and Possible Strategies, being an integral part of the next National Strategy, and then contributing to the future development of vocational education and training in Australia.

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[1] *An Approach to Access and Equity in Vocational Education and Training - Issues Paper*, ANTA, April 1996.
[2] *An Approach to Access and Equity in Vocational Education and Training - Consultation Paper*, ANTA, June 1996, ISBN 0642 25088.
[3] *A Stocktake and Analysis of Access and Equity reports in vocational education and training, 1990-95*, ANTA, September 1996.
[4] *Participation and Attainment of Individual Client Groups in Vocational Education and Training*, ANTA, May 1996, ISBN 0642 25241 6
[5] *ibid.*

MATRIX

showing causes of disadvantage

	OUT OF WORK		IN WORK	
	Women	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	• language, literacy and numeracy • basic work and life skills • transport • income support • cultural appropriateness • mode of delivery (time, place, form) • discriminatory attitudes • level/type of training • lack of employment opportunities • family care	• language, literacy and numeracy • basic work and life skills • transport • income support • cultural appropriateness • discriminatory attitudes • level/type of training • lack of employment opportunities	• employee support • language, literacy and numeracy • cultural appropriateness • mode of delivery (time, place, form) • level/type of training • discriminatory attitudes • lack of career structures • RPL • family care	• employee support • language, literacy and numeracy • cultural appropriateness • mode of delivery (time, place, form) • level/type of training • discriminatory attitudes • lack of career structures • RPL
Non-English speaking migrants/refugees	• language, literacy and numeracy • cultural appropriateness • mode of delivery (time, place, form) • income support • student support • level/type of training • discriminatory attitudes • RPL • family care	• language, literacy and numeracy • cultural appropriateness • income support • student support • level/type of training • discriminatory attitudes • RPL	• employee/student support • language, literacy and numeracy • cultural appropriateness • mode of delivery (time, place, form) • level/type of training • discriminatory attitudes • lack of career structures • RPL • family care	• employee/student support • language, literacy and numeracy • cultural appropriateness • mode of delivery (time, place, form) • level/type of training • discrimination/ attitudes • lack of career structures • RPL

28

29

	OUT OF WORK		IN WORK	
	Women	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**
Disability	• student/community support • income support • literacy and numeracy • basic work and life skills • physical access • mode of delivery (time, place, form) • level/type of training • discriminatory attitudes • RPL • family care	• student/community support • income support • literacy and numeracy • basic work and life skills • physical access • mode of delivery (place, form) • level/type of training • discriminatory attitudes • RPL	• employee support • literacy and numeracy • mode of delivery (time, place, form) • level/type of training • discriminatory attitudes • RPL • family care	• employee support • literacy and numeracy • mode of delivery (time, place, form) • level/type of training • discriminatory attitudes • RPL
Rural and Remote	• lack of training • lack of employment opportunities • mode of delivery (time, place, form) • RPL • family care	• lack of training • lack of employment opportunities • mode of delivery (place, form) • RPL	• lack of training • lack of career structures • employee support • mode of delivery (time, place, form) • RPL • family care	• lack of training • lack of career structures • employee support • mode of delivery (time, place, form) • RPL
Women	• mode of delivery (time, place, form) • income support • student support • basic work skills • level/type of training • discriminatory attitudes • gender inclusiveness • RPL - family care	n/a	• mode of delivery (time, place, form) • income support • student support • basic work skills • level/type of training • discriminatory attitudes • gender inclusiveness • RPL • family care	n/a

	OUT OF WORK		IN WORK	
	Women	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**
Other (eg. those leaving institutions)	• literacy and numeracy • basic work and life skills • mode of delivery (time, place, form) • level/type of training • attitudes/discrimination • RPL	• literacy and numeracy • basic work and life skills • mode of delivery (place, form) • level/type of training • attitudes/discrimination • RPL	n/a	n/a